



Mississippi Department
of
Human Services:
CCDF
Newsletter

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This newsletter will provide bi-weekly updates as the Child Care and Development Fund State Plan is developed and implemented.

What Is CCDF?

To support early childhood programs across the United States, Congress passed the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014. This grant reauthorizes the law governing the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) for the first time since 1996 and directs CCDF funds to programs and initiatives that best align with a state's strategic plans for early childhood.

What Is the Role of MDHS?

Mississippi has designated the Mississippi Department of Human Services as the lead agency that receives CCDF funds. The 2014 federal legislation mandated significant changes to the CCDF program. As a result, our state plan now includes vast changes for the MDHS child care payment program.

Every three years, the Division of Early Childhood Care and Development (DECCD) within MDHS prepares a state plan for submission to the federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF). This plan includes a description of how the state will administer CCDF funds during the plan timeframe and in accordance with federal guidance.

In spring 2016, the state submitted its CCDF plan for the period of June 1, 2016, through September 30, 2018. MDHS has recently learned the plan has been conditionally approved, meaning the plan is approved with some additional conditions to be met in our implementation plans.

In addition, the state is developing a comprehensive implementation strategy to ensure all requirements are met. Because many of the new federal regulations must be implemented by September 30, 2016, the implementation strategy will be published in the fall to offer additional guidance for the state.

Given all the new federally mandated changes, MDHS is working with NSPARC to revise its policy manual for the child care payment program. SECAC is reaching out to child care center directors for assistance with reviewing the new policies and spreading the word about the new federal requirements. These changes to the policy manual are scheduled to be submitted to the Secretary of State's Office in August and will follow the Administrative Procedures Act process. There will be multiple opportunities for public feedback during this time.

What Is the Role of SECAC?

The state has worked diligently over the last few years to create a high-quality early childhood system to meet the educational and developmental needs of Mississippi's children. The State Early Childhood Advisory Council (SECAC), established by the Governor's office, has facilitated much of this work. Therefore, MDHS will significantly rely on the existing SECAC structure to implement the grant in the state and foster collaboration and coordination between all stakeholders.

June 2016 Workgroup Meetings

Several new CCDF requirements must be addressed in the state plan. Most of the requirements fall within three primary focus areas: policy, consumer education, and professional development. SECAC created three working groups, comprised of early childhood stakeholders, to assist MDHS in fulfilling federal requirements.

Policy Workgroup

The Policy Workgroup met Monday, June 20, to discuss different strategies to provide equal access to stable, high-quality child care for low-income children. The group also discussed policies on the health and safety of children in different child care environments, the eligibility redetermination process, and the gradual phase-out assistance rule. The workgroup suggested ways to increase access to quality child care in areas with high concentrations of poverty and considered options such as an immunization grace period for homeless and foster care children. Finally, the group discussed ways to strengthen child care services by conducting developmental screenings and pointing parents to available services and resources if the child needs additional support.



Consumer Education Workgroup

The Consumer Education Workgroup met Wednesday, June 22, to focus on policies that will assist parents, providers, and the general public in making informed consumer choices and accessing resources. This conversation also included strategies on reaching target populations such as non-English speakers and people with disabilities. The group's discussion will be used to guide the development of the federally mandated consumer education web site, which will assist parents in finding helpful information about child care centers throughout Mississippi.

Professional Development Workgroup

The Professional Development Workgroup met Thursday, June 23, to discuss strategies to protect the health and safety of children in child care settings. Enhancing professional development opportunities for the early childhood workforce is a top priority and will ultimately increase the overall quality of child care services. The group discussed both orientation and ongoing health and safety training opportunities for directors and staff. The law outlines 10 specific topics to be addressed in trainings for both licensed and unlicensed providers, so the group shared information about training resources and discussed ways MDHS could serve as a clearinghouse for all relevant information pertaining to child care providers. The group wrapped up its discussion by proposing strategies on how to effectively communicate all of these new policy changes to providers before the September 30 deadline.

Timeline:

An online portal is now available for your feedback:

<https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form?EQBCT=81f6199cf990413bb131f164f8f2adc0>.

The MDHS policy manual will be submitted to the Secretary of State's Office for further public comment and review in August.

Contact:

For more information about CCDF, please visit <http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/early-childhood-care-development/child-care-resources/ccdf-state-plan/>.

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